

Kumamoto News

Kumamoto Japan, Sister City of San Antonio

Greetings from the New Mayor

SEISHI KOHYAMA



Hello to all the citizens of San Antonio from your sister city of Kumamoto! On December 3 of last year, I was elected as the 29th Mayor of Kumamoto City. This position is one of both great honor and great responsibility.

Kumamoto City is currently improving the city's functioning by looking to merge with neighboring towns and

villages to become an ordinance-designated city. In addition, we are focused on bringing the Kyushu bullet train to Kumamoto in order to make our city more appealing. There are many important issues relating to the future that we are wrestling with at the moment. I would like to work with Kumamoto citizens on these issues, collectively pooling our strength and knowledge for the purpose of building a new Kumamoto.

Ever since the forming of our sister city affiliation in 1987, exchange activities have developed over a wide variety of fields. For example, participants in sports exchange such as baseball and volleyball are able to experience home stays that create unbreakable bonds of friendship. In addition, other central aspects of the relationship between our two cities have been the mutual dispatch of high school and university exchange students and the sharing of medical knowledge. I believe the ability to sustain this active exchange is wholly due to the understanding and support offered by Mayor Edward Garza, the San Antonio International Affairs Department, the Japan-America Society of San Antonio, and all San Antonio citizens. I would like to offer my warm appreciation to all of you for the kindness you have bestowed upon us along the course of our relationship.

However, the marking of our sister city 15-year anniversary takes place in a considerably transformed society. In response to the changing socio-economic situation and the diversification of citizens' needs regarding international exchange, I think Kumamoto's international exchange activities are in a transition period as well. Up until this point, the government has largely led

these activities, but from now on I would like to strive to allow citizens and citizens' groups to play a bigger part in them. Thanks to the friendship between our cities a base of exchange has already been established, and I look forward to a future where citizens of both our cities can build on this foundation to overcome language barriers and create long-lasting grass-root exchange.

I would like to close by asking for the continued support and cooperation of all citizens of San Antonio. I offer my heartfelt hope for the further development of your city.

Curriculum Vitae

NAME: Seishi Kohyama

DATE OF BIRTH: June 10, 1965

Education

March 1989: Graduated from Kyushu University, Bachelor's Degree in Economics

March 1984: Graduated from Kumamoto Prefecture Seiseiko High School

Work Experience

December 2002 - Present: Took office as the 29th Mayor of Kumamoto City

November 2002: Elected as Mayor of Kumamoto City
September 2002: Resigned from Kumamoto Prefectural Assembly

February 2002: Chairman of Standing Committee on Health and Welfare, Kumamoto Prefectural Assembly

April 1999: Elected for a 2nd term, Kumamoto Prefectural Assembly

April 1995: Elected to Kumamoto Prefectural Assembly

April 1989 - September 1994: The Nippon Credit Bank, Ltd. (Currently Aozora Bank, Ltd.)



◆2002 Sister City Exchange Activities

Big Success!

2002 International Urban Environmental Conference Mayor Edward D. Garza participated as guest speaker

On October 28-30, 2002, Kumamoto City hosted the 2002 International Urban Environmental Conference, which aimed to develop solutions to local and global environmental problems in alliance with many cities from around the world.

This year marked the 10th anniversary of the 1992 Rio Declaration. The 1992 “Global Summit” held in Rio de Janeiro concluded on a high note with the adoption of the “Rio Declaration” and “Agenda 21” calling for preservation of the global environment along with sustainable development. Cities are expected to implement new strategies that enable sustainable development and to build new global partnerships to tackle global environmental problems.

The Mayor of San Antonio, Mr. Edward D. Garza, visited Kumamoto for the first time to attend this conference. Representatives from all of Kumamoto’s friendship/sister cities also attended this conference. We have four friendship/sister cities: Guilin, China; Heidelberg, Germany; Fukui, Japan; and San Antonio, USA. On October 28, Mayor Garza gave a 20-minute presentation in front of 200 participants including mayors of other friendship/sister cities and the imperial family “Takamadonomiya.” The title of his presentation was “Meeting the Challenges of Sustainable Development.” He mentioned the outline of San Antonio’s Master Plan City adopted in 1997 and detailed elements such as the “Clear air plan,” “Energy efficiency projects,” “Water Quality programs,” and “Solid waste management.”

This conference consisted of three major parts: a “Local Government Symposium” supported by local governments of Japan and other countries, a “Global Citizens’ Conference” supported by citizens and environmental non-governmental organizations, and “Commemorative Events.”

One of the Commemorative Events was the “Children’s



Mayor Garza is giving a presentation.

Environmental Poster Exhibition.” Its purpose was to enhance the understanding and awareness of the children in our four friendship/sister cities regarding environmental protection. About 100 posters designed by the students from the four cities and Kumamoto were displayed at the Tsuruya Department store, 8th floor gallery.

The conference was a large success. We would like to thank Mayor Garza for an outstanding presentation, as well as all other participants from San Antonio for their cooperation during this conference.





Wings of Friendship Tour

~ To commemorate the 15th anniversary of our Sister City relationship ~

Kumamoto citizens delegation visits San Antonio

Kumamoto City Treasurer Mr. Kiyoshi Moritaka led a 62-member Kumamoto citizens' delegation in visiting San Antonio on July 1, 2002.

On their first evening, there was a welcome dinner at the Convention Center attended by many San Antonio citizens, including city councilman David Garcia, city councilman Enrique Martin, staff from the International Affairs Department and Japan America Society of San Antonio members.

Due to the heavy rain that hit San Antonio throughout most of their three-day stay, the delegation unfortunately missed the chance to go to a ranch for horseback riding and an outdoor BBQ, as well as a river barge ride down the River Walk, which were supposed to be the highlights of their visit.

However, they did have the opportunity to visit the Kumamoto-En Garden at the San Antonio Botanical Gardens which was a gift from Kumamoto to commemorate our sister city relationship (see page 8). They also visited the Alamo and enjoyed Tex-Mex food at a lunch reception hosted by the International Affairs Department.

On July 3rd, they were divided into three groups that left for Seattle and Las Vegas.



Welcome Reception at Convention Center

San Antonio delegation travels to Kumamoto.

On July 7-9 of last year, a San Antonio citizens' delegation consisting of Japan America Society of San Antonio members, city officials, and citizens of San Antonio visited Kumamoto City.

Councilman David Garcia and Councilman Enrique "Kike" Martin, in coordination with the Japan America Society of San Antonio, led this delegation. The 17 delegation members enjoyed their visits to sites such as Kumamoto Castle, Suizenji Jojuen Park, and the former residence of Hosokawa Gyobu. The group also participated in a courtesy visit to the Mayor of Kumamoto City and met with city staff to discuss common goals and the possibility of development in the fields of cultural, educational and business relationships between our two cities.

We have had more than 200 exchange activities during our 15-year relationship and now San Antonio is very familiar to many Kumamoto citizens. More than 50 people from Kumamoto attended the welcome dinner on the first day of the delegation's visit. They had a very good time meeting with their counterparts and sharing their experiences.

After their visit to Kumamoto, the San Antonio group traveled to Kyoto and Tokyo.



Delegation members at Kumamoto City Hall

Children's Environmental Poster Exhibition in Kumamoto

As one of the commemorative events of the 2002 International Urban Environmental Conference, the "Children's Environmental Poster Exhibition" took place from October 26-30, 2002 in Kumamoto.

The purpose was to enhance the understanding and awareness of the children in Kumamoto's four friendship/sister cities regarding environmental protection. About 100 posters designed by the students from Fukui, Japan; Guilin, China; Heidelberg, Germany; San Antonio, and Kumamoto were displayed at the Tsuruya Department store, 8th floor gallery.



Mr. Dan Cardenas, Director of Environmental Services, City of San Antonio, visited the Poster Exhibition. He visited Kumamoto to attend the conference.

ment store, 8th floor gallery.

The City of San Antonio had over 200 entries from students in grades 1-8. After facing competition on a local level, 20 posters were chosen to be displayed in Kumamoto. Poster contest themes included waste reduction, recycling promotion, energy saving, the use of natural energy, and the reduction of water use.

We would like to give our appreciation to all contestants for their outstanding entries. We hope this event encourages students in San Antonio to become interested in environmental issues.

Municipal Teachers Delegation



Kumamoto Teachers introduced Japanese Culture at Rodriguez Elementary

Ten teachers from Kumamoto City spent three weeks in San Antonio from August 17-September 6, 2002. They took an intensive English course at the University of the Incarnate Word to improve their language skills and also to research the methods used to teach English as a second language.

For the last week, they visited seven local schools in San Antonio including the International School of the Americas, Saint Mary's Hall, Tafolla Middle School, Carver Academy, Rodriguez Elementary School, Brackenridge High School and St. Philips College.

They observed the actual classes and introduced Japanese culture to students. They also had the opportunity to experience a home stay in San Antonio. This program expanded their base of knowledge from an educational perspective.

Kumamoto City Hospital Medical Training



From left, Naomi Morishitsa, Kumamoto Staff Representative, Ms. Masako Fukuoka, Nurse

Every year, Kumamoto City Hospital sends staff to San Antonio to learn about its medical practices. Last year, a nurse in ophthalmology, Ms. Masako Fukuoka, visited San Antonio from May 11-27.

The San Antonio Metro Health District and the City of San Antonio coordinated the program.

Ms. Fukuoka visited more than 15 area hospitals and related organizations focused on HIV and AIDS treatment, a field that is very advanced in America compared to Japan.

She learned about the various support systems for people infected with HIV, as well as about the prevention and education methods used for the general public.



◆ What's new in Kumamoto?

The World Conference on Women and Sport set for May 2006

Like in many other fields, in the world of sports as well there is a movement for women's social advancement and for the improvement of women's status.

Kumamoto is going to host the **"World Conference on Women and Sport" on May 11- 16, 2006**. This conference is held every four years under the leadership of the International Working Group on Women and Sport (IWG) and host countries. The first conference was held in Brighton, England in 1994 and the second conference took place in Windhoek, Namibia in 1998.

"Investing in Change" was the theme of the third World Conference on Women and Sport held in Montreal, Canada, from May 16-19, 2002. More than 550 people from 97 countries participated in the Montreal conference, which provided an opportunity to take stock of progress for women and sport since the second World Conference, share experiences and solutions, plan future directions and celebrate achievements.

At the last conference, advancements regarding the issues below were reported:

- Reach out beyond the current boundaries of the sport sector. There are a large number of different sectors including health, medicine, human rights, education, community development, law, police, the media, equal opportunities commission and foreign embassies.
- Promote and share information about the positive contributions from girls' and women's involvement in sport
- Build the capacity of women as leaders and decision-makers
- Avert the "world crisis in physical education"
- Encourage the media to positively portray and significantly cover girls' and women's involvement in sport
- Ensure a safe and supportive environment for girls and women participating in sport
- Ensure that policies and programs recognize the differences and diversity among women
- Recognize the importance of governments to sport development
- Encourage more women to become researchers in sport, and more research to be undertaken on critical issues relating to women in sport

In November 2001, Kumamoto announced that it is go-



ing to be the next host of the conference. Accordingly, Former Mayor Misumi attended the "2002 World Conference on Women and Sport," where he introduced the City of Kumamoto by showing a video.

The Kumamoto conference will bring together approximately 600 international delegates from about 100 countries interested in sport and the general advancement of the state of women. They will come together to discuss issues relating to women in sports, to report on progress since the third conference, and to chart future plans.

Former Mayor Misumi said, "It is an honor to be chosen as the next place for this conference. We have to reconsider the importance of the realization of a gender equal society in regard to sport now more than ever. This conference should also reach out beyond the sport sector. We are going to work in cooperation with some sport-related organizations to prepare some of the pre-events which will promote this conference and contribute to its success."



2002-2003 Welcome! New Exchange Students 🎵



Yukiko Tanihira, Our Lady of the Lake University



My name is Yukiko Tanihira. I am from Kumamoto, Japan. I came here to improve my English because I would like to be a Junior High School English teacher. I have been staying here for nearly three months. At the beginning, it is not easy to follow my classes. But people at my college are so nice that I can enjoy my studying. Thanks to my friends, I am getting used to my classes. I think people in San Antonio are friendlier than people in Kumamoto because most people greet with a smile even though they do not know me. I am happy to be here. I will do my best to make my dreams come true.

Shigeyosi Ikeda, University of the Incarnate Word



Hi, I am Shigeyoshi Ikeda. I came here about 2 months ago. So far, I like San Antonio because people are very friendly.

I am an exchange student, so I will stay here only for one year. Now I go to University of the Incarnate Word, and I am taking English Composition1, Computer Literacy, Public Speaking, Badminton/ Racquetball, and Elementary Japanese. Classes are difficult for me except Elementary Japanese because professors speak so fast. But they know I am from Japan so they take care of me and help me. I am a member of soccer club at UIW, I practice everyday except weekends.

I am enjoying my life here in the United States thanks to people around me. I would like to make friends with a lot of people. At UIW, there are lots of international students, I really like it and enjoy it. I am very happy to be here. The only problem I have is that I do not like Mexican food!

Chie Ogata, University of the Incarnate Word



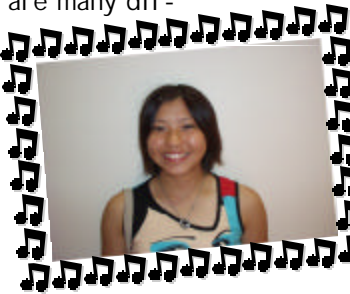
Howdy! Nice to meet you, I'm Chie Ogata from Kumamoto University. Three months has past quickly since I came here. I think it's because I'm studying hard (Yes, I realized how busy American students are!) and having a lot of fun!! I like San Antonio, the city with beautiful River Walk and kind people. I'd like visit to other places during my stay. Since I like communicating with people of different cultures and introducing Japanese culture, I really appreciate this opportunity. Thank you!

Tomoko Kawahigashi

Incarnate Word High School

I felt many many things since I came here. There are many different foods, language and cultures. People here are very kind. I also feel that my family, friends, teachers and people around me are very important. I want to know about the cultures of many countries.

I appreciate having precious experience.



Masanobu Nishida

St. Anthony Catholic High School



Yasuhiro Shimoda

St. Anthony Catholic High School



It's already two months since I came to San Antonio. Even now, I am still confused with the difference between the culture of Japan and America and of course English.

I found San Antonio has lots of nature in the street. It is very beautiful city. Especially, the Riverwalk in the Downtown is my favorite place. I want my friends and teachers in Chiharadai High School to visit and see it.

The school life is pretty hard. Even I have 3, 4 classes in one day, it is too hard for me to follow it because of my low English skill. Teachers speak so fast sometimes, I can't understand what teachers asked me to do. I really think I need to study English more to get to understand the classes and make more good friends or deepen friendship.

The life in abroad is not always fun, it is sometimes lonely and it makes me know how precious my family and friends are in Japan. But I think this is so cool and special experience. I would like to visit many places not only San Antonio during my stay.

Ai Kimura

Incarnate Word High School



When I came to here, I was very excited like "Oh!! There are many foreign people!!" In fact, I am a foreign person here.

I got here about 2 month ago. I have many friends in San Antonio now. However, I couldn't make friends so easily, because It was my weak point to speak English. I wanted to talk with some friends, but I had no idea about what to speak and how to talk.

Therefore, I thought about what to talk in Japanese in advance like my hobby, My school, My boyfriend, and my life of Japan. Then I translated them in English and tried to talk. It was stiff to me at first. But gradually, I was getting to able to have fun little by little.

Sometimes I miss Japan and Hitsuyukan High School. However I decided to do my best and came here. So I'm gonna enjoy doing in my life all along!!



My name is



JASSAK Members and exchange students from San Antonio at Mt. Kinbo in Kumamoto.

From left, Ms. Megumi Nanbu, Ms. Karen Pedroza, Ms. Miyuki Uto, Mr. Orand Lackey, Mr. Atusi Ota, Ms. Kaori Shumoto.

2000-2002 Kumamoto exchange students have organized JASSAK in July 2002. Please check it out!!

Greetings from President

Kaori Shumoto, and I'm proud to assume the president of Japan America Society San Antonio in Kumamoto. I'm working with wonderful partners, Megumi Nanbu, Atsushi Ota, and Miyuki Uto. Our purpose organizing JASSAK is to make the relationship between San Antonio and Kumamoto stronger, and to share chances to exchange cultural things among many people no matter what where we are from. I would like everyone involved in JASSAK to have fun by joining our activities positively.

Kumamoto-en Garden

A Gift from Kumamoto, Symbolizing the Long-standing Friendship and Cooperation that Exists Between Our Cities.

The Kumamoto-En Garden in the San Antonio Botanical Gardens was constructed as a joint effort between the City of Kumamoto and City of San Antonio. This garden was a gift from Kumamoto to commemorate our sister city relationship in April of 1989. Since then, San Antonio has been putting much effort into maintaining this beautiful garden.

The garden was patterned after Suizenji Park in Kumamoto and contains many Japanese elements. It is intended to show the beauty of authentic Japanese gardening as well as to introduce visitors to different elements used in Japanese gardens.

Many styles and techniques of Japanese garden construction are included here. The different paving and bamboo fencing techniques are two examples. The mountain located in the center of the garden represents Japan's Mount Fuji. There is a creek separating the garden into two sections. One side represents Kumamoto and Japan, and the other side represents San Antonio and the US. The stone bridge built across the creek represents the friendship between the two cities and countries.

The location is not so far from downtown, so why don't you stop by to enjoy the exquisite Japanese beauty and calm?





My summer grant trip to Kumamoto, 2002

By Daniel DeGrasse

My summer began with a bang. I was going back to Japan after six years of absence. I lived in the Yokohama area from 1989 to 1994 and went back to visit for about 6 weeks in 1996. I attended regular Japanese preschool and kindergarten and first through third grades. So, I was fluent. Since then, I had lost my language skills for Japanese until I came to Saint Mary's Hall last year where I enrolled in Japanese. My fascination with the language and the culture returned rapidly. So, when our school began handing out summer grants, I was one of the first to apply, and I was the only one that invented my own program, a Homestay in Japan while attending High School in Kumamoto.

I got off the airplane on June 25 at around 7 PM local time in Kumamoto. When I collected my luggage I stepped into a strange new area, not knowing what the next month would bring. I had sent the city hall in Kumamoto an email with my picture so my host family would know who to look for at the airport. I don't think that was entirely necessary, because I think I was the only foreigner on the entire airplane. I was amazed at how quickly I remembered all my conversational Japanese. Within a couple of hours, I was talking about my family and life in San Antonio with considerable ease.

The first week I was there, I took life easy. I overcame jet-lag, and did some sightseeing in and around Kumamoto. I loved and embellished every minute of it because I knew that for the next three weeks that I would be working hard. I stayed with the Tominaga's who lived in Tatsuda-machi. There were two sons, aged 11 and 12, and one daughter, aged 14. They took me into their house as one of their own. I thank them for doing so with my most gracious heart. I also thank them for not speaking very much English to me while I was there, even though their English was superb; because of that, I advanced my Japanese to a level that I would not have otherwise. The host parents were most gracious and the host-daughter even asked me to help her on English homework when she did not need to.

My second week, I attended Gakuen Dai Fuzoku High School, which my school has a quasi-sister school relationship with. From the beginning, everybody was very kind. I attended all classes that my class had and even found myself actively listening to the ancient Japanese lesson. I found that the class I understood least was math; I understood it as the teacher wrote it on the board, but with word problems I was lost. I immediately became friends with a guy named Konomi, whom I frequently emailed. Not only did my Japanese ability skyrocket, but also Konomi's English drastically improved too. I truly appreciated the school for allowing me to visit, for my Japanese would be nowhere near where it is today. ARIGATO GOZAIMASU.

My last two weeks were spent at Hitsuyukan High School where I received an equally warm reception. I found that there were three other foreigners at Hitsuyukan, 2 girls from San Antonio, and one girl from New Zealand. I found that the students

here were more likely to try out their English on me and were not embarrassed by it. They also took pleasure in hearing one or more of the other foreigners talk to me.

The highlight of my stay here was when I was allowed to play with their band.

This trip was very successful, and I thank everyone who was part of it and I thank the people of your beautiful city for being SO open and gracious. Ms. Uemura from the International Exchange Section at Kumamoto city hall and its director worked tirelessly for weeks to make this program possible.



Daniel DeGrasse
at Saint Mary's Hall

Japan America Society of San Antonio

Japan America Society of San Antonio is a strong community organization which plays an important role as a bridge between the United States and Japan and is also a strong supporter of the Kumamoto and San Antonio sister city relationship.

JASSA coordinates and joins many Japan related cultural events in San Antonio such as Texas Folk Life Festival, Asian Festival, Viva Botanica, Kumamoto-en Day and Japan Week Festival.

Please check additional information in the website. <http://www.jas-sa.org/>



Are Kumamoto People Stubborn?

Regional Japanese Personality traits

Naomi Morishita

It is often said, “Japan is a racially homogeneous country”, but this does not mean that the Japanese have just a single character or culture. Differences remain, even though these days the growth of the mass media has further accelerated the homogenization of the country.

No matter how superficially homogenous our country may appear the particular regional character and peculiarities still remain. Most Japanese take pride in their hometowns, and have strong feelings for the regions in which they grew up. Believe it or not, there are many regional Japanese stereotypes: Osaka is full of gourmets, in Nagoya they go all out for ceremonies and festivals: and in Kumamoto, the men are stiff-necked and set in their ways.

Even in a culture as enamored with preserving tradition as Japan is, time change and people change. Social contradiction and disparities that were easy to overlook during the boom economy of the 90's have burst the surface, and as the 21st Century progress, the rate at which Japan continues to change is accelerating – both at the social and individual levels.

So where does all this societal reform leave the people of Kumamoto? A recent article from the local Kumamoto newspaper may provide insight. 1500 residents were polled as to their feeling about Kumamoto and their disposition as citizens of Kumamoto. Looking at

their answer, we may be able to put our fingers on the pulse of the prefecture.

In response to the question, “You know you are living in Kumamoto when...” one in three respondents showed their affinity for Kumamoto's natural beauty by responding “When we visit Amakusa/ Aso.” The second most popular response was “When I see Kumamoto Castle,” “When I am with my neighbors,” and “When I drink the Water,” there responses show the strong affinity that the citizens of Kumamoto have for the places, the people, and the language of their home.

Equally, edifying are the respondents' descriptions of their own character. Surprisingly, both men's and women's number one answer was that they are, “Kind/sentimental”. The next most popular response for men was 2) stubborn 3) strong sense of duty 4) short –tempered, and 5) earnest. For women, the responses were 2) stubborn 3) easy to get along with 4) earnest, and 5) good –natured. One particular point of interest is that “stubborn” dropped to second place for men (down from No. 1 five years ago) which means that the rough tough Kumamoto Cowboy may be being replaced by sensitive new-age guys.

Another interesting statistic is the respondent's views towards marriage. In response to the question “Should everyone get married,” 63% of men and 47%

of women either agreed or strongly agreed. While it is unavoidable to notice the disparity in the gender's responses to this question, breaking the question down by age show an even gender gap. Of respondents over 50, 70% of men and 60% of women take marriage for granted. On the other hand, only 49% of men, and just 20% of women in their 20's feel a social obligation to get married, viewing it instead as only one possible lifestyle choice.

I hope this article has in some ways opened your eyes to the lifestyles and opinions of the residents of your sister city. Being born and raised there, I have to admit that some of these descriptions match me pretty well. I definitely find myself agreeing with the younger generations' attitudes about marriage, but more than anything, I am full of love and pride for my hometown.

-Translation by David Murphy, Japan America Society of San Antonio



Suspension of the Kumamoto City Staff Dispatch Program

Kumamoto City would like to announce that its staff dispatch program to San Antonio is being suspended. There will be no staff member posted to San Antonio, but Kumamoto City will strive to maintain the sister city relationship that has been built via activities such as student exchange programs as well as sports, cultural and medical exchange.

A strong bond of friendship has been created between our two cities through the thirteen Kumamoto City staff members who have worked in the San Antonio International Affairs Department*, as well as in the general community. This is thanks to the strong support that San Antonio has given our exchange activities up until this point, and Kumamoto City offers its deep appreciation for this, along with humbly asking for the same understanding and support in the future.

Kumamoto Staff Representatives in San Antonio, 1992-2003

- 1) Yoshihiro Kitamori* (April 1992-November 1993)
- 2) Yuji Higuchi (April 1994-April 1995)
- 3) Toru Tsujiyama (April 1995-April 1996)
- 4) Osamu Yoshizumi (May 1996-October 1996)
- 5) Masaaki Okamoto (October 1996-April 1997)
- 6) Kaori Miyata (April 1997-October 1997)
- 7) Hirokazu Kobayashi (October 1997-April 1998)
- 8) Emiko Goda (April 1998-October 1998)
- 9) Yutaka Naito (October 1998-April 1999)
- 10) Kenichi Mishima (April 1999-April 2000)
- 11) Natsuko Uemura (April 2000-April 2001)
- 12) Misaki Tateo (April 2001-April 2002)
- 13) Naomi Morishita (April 2002-March 2003)



Editor's Letter

Naomi Morishita

Since I came to San Antonio, I have had lots of new experiences through working with the City of San Antonio International Affairs Department. It is very interesting for me to compare the municipal systems of Kumamoto and San Antonio. There also are many other differences between both societies. There are two areas in particular where I think the US is more advanced than Japan. One is the relatively high awareness level regarding human rights and community service. The other is the important role of non-profit organizations (NPO) in American society.

Last year, I had the opportunity to talk to Ms. Joyce Coleman who is the director of Family Violence Prevention Service, Inc. (She retired her position at the end of 2002) This non-profit organization runs the Battered Women's Shelter and also provides various kinds of services for reducing the overall level of family violence in the San Antonio community.

I was able to visit their shelter and was impressed not only by the excellent facility, but also by the well-organized cooperation system that exists between public and private entities. I understand that the teamwork among the police, counselors, hospitals, schools and shelter facilities has helped to make this program successful.

In Japan, the first domestic violence (DV) law was passed by the national legislature on April 6, 2001 and went into effect nationwide on October 13, 2001.

As a result of this enforcement, DV cases have now begun to surface. For many years, DV has existed in Japan, but only in the shadows because what happened within the family was not considered to be a social concern.

I think we can learn a lot about DV and women's rights issues from the US system, as well as from the roles of non-profit organizations. Kumamoto is going to host the international conference "World Conference on Women and Sport" in 2006 in cooperation with many NPOs and private companies. I hope that it is successful and that it can serve as a "trigger" for people's interest in women's issues and community power.



Kumamoto Newsletter
In San Antonio
203 S. St. Mary's, Suite 360,
International Center
San Antonio, Texas 78205, U.S.A.

Editor: Naomi Morishita,
Staff Representative of Kumamoto, Japan, in San Antonio
TEL: (210)207-8110 FAX: (210)207-8113
E-mail: kumamoto@sanantonio.gov
Kumamoto City Web: <http://www.city.kumamoto.kumamoto.jp/>